



TITLE:

Traditional Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution in Modern Africa: The Bodior Ritual and the Enduring Kroumen Versus Lobi-Dagara Conflict in Southern Côte D'ivoire

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## TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN MODERN AFRICA: THE *BODIOR* RITUAL AND THE ENDURING KROUMEN VERSUS LOBI-DAGARA CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN CÔTE D’IVOIRE

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**ABSTRACT** The article examines the unexplored challenging role of youth in the traditional approaches of conflict resolution in Africa. Using Côte d’Ivoire as a case study, this article explores the relationship between intergenerational roles and conflict resolution. Traditionalist anthropologists tend to found the strength of the customary mechanisms on the dexterity and knowledge of elders, but serious doubt remains about the effectiveness of this traditional practice. In Côte d’Ivoire, as young Kroumen challenge their own traditions of peacemaking, they hinder the efficiency of customary approaches to resolve the 1999 conflict between the Kroumen and the Lobi-Dagara. In 2006 the Kroumen ritual of *Bodior* was performed and was supposed to seal reconciliation and social cohesion after the deadly conflict but, recent field-work reveals lingering mistrust and tensions 10 years after this ritual.

**Key Words:** Conflict; Côte d’Ivoire; Youth; Traditions; Rituals; Conflict resolution.

### INTRODUCTION

Intrinsically, the culture of prevention and conflict resolution has been a dominant feature of life in traditional Africa. Customary institutions in African conflict regulation are experiencing a revival along with debates about their effectiveness in the current modern environment. Discussions about mechanisms of conflict resolution on the African continent have long opposed traditionalists to modernists. On the one hand, traditionalists affirm that indigenous rituals, palaver institutions, and proverbs prevent and resolve local, inter-regional, and inter-communal conflicts (Niane, 2005; Diouf, 2005; Tamba, 2016; Ntahombaye, 1999; Bah, 1999). Scholars of this traditional approach praise institutions such as *Sanankouya* in Mali, which is a “joking alliance” as well as inter-clan marriage and extended matrimonial alliances that foster mediation, diplomacy and peace-building (Konaté, 1999). On the other hand, modernists argue that these patriarchal traditional systems often silence voices of women and youth and instead emphasize the key role of elders (Mattes, 1997; Logan, 2008; Mawere & Mayekiso, 2014). Beyond the cleavage, other studies have articulated a hybrid peacemaking approach of conflict resolution on the continent (Fanthorpe, 2006; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2007; Young, 1995). For example, Mac Ginty’s (2010) concept of “hybrid peace” incorporates both external internationally-based interventions and local traditions and actors to seek effective solution to crises. This article focuses on local actors, especially young people who, despite their active role in the onset

and unfolding of crises, are often ignored in the resolution process. It argues that the youth whose knowledge of both traditional and modern rules influences village affairs are a critical component of the study of the traditional mechanisms of peacemaking on the continent.

I use the *Bodior* ritual case in Tabou (South-West of Côte d'Ivoire) to examine the intergenerational tensions that surround customary management of social conflict in Africa by describing the increasing agency of the youth. Ethnographies of peoples in western Côte d'Ivoire have shown the implementation of traditions over the modern judiciary system, especially in the management of land conflicts. Traditions relied on elderly authorities to perform rituals to make a durable peace (Chauveau & Dozon, 1985; Chauveau, 2000; Koné & Chauveau, 1998). However in the 1990s, the youth increasingly resisted to the customary management of community conflicts. In numerous conflicts between autochthones and immigrants, youth living in rurality demanded the departure of the settlers as the only solution instead of traditional arrangements made by elders. In the December 1999 conflict between Ivorian Kroumen and immigrant Lobi-Dagara (from Burkina-Faso), young people raised up their resistance to the customary arbitration. Out of respect for the Kroumen tradition, the *Bodior* ritual—the one last not to be contested by anyone—was undertaken with the firm conviction by all that this sacred institution will definitively seal peace between Kroumen and Lobi-Dagara. Nevertheless, in spite of its traditional power, the *Bodior* was contested by young Kroumen in the Hompo tribe.

Today's African youth bear multiple and composite identities mustered by both rurality and urbanity, tradition and modernity (Mbembe, 1985). The complex identities are also affected by an involuntary delay in the adulthood accomplishment (job, marriage, family) that Honwana (2013: 3) called "waithood". Economic, social and political crisis have also shaped young people struggle to gain a social status (Honwana & De Boek, 2005), as well as to question the domination of elder generation (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999). Thus, generational conflicts arise based on the gap between seniors' political promises and the disillusion of the economic precariousness and unemployment facing young people (Golaz et al., 2016). In Côte d'Ivoire, numerous studies characterize youth populations as politically violent (Banegas, 2007). Young people in many western rural communities contest familial authority, and the presence of immigrant communities (Chauveau & Bobo, 2003; Chauveau, 2005; Bobo, 2010; Crook, 2007). With the economic and political crisis, youth struggle to transform local economy by introducing new crops and taking over familial land (Babo & Droz, 2008).

In spite of their active involvement—either as victims or perpetrators—in the outbreak of land and intercommunity conflicts in rural areas, little is said about youth perspectives in the success or failure of customary peacemaking. Reynolds and Acio (2017) state that since youth generally do not have voice in land matters; youth roles in conflict resolution related to land is ignored. Research on the Kroumen and Lobi-Dagara conflict of Tabou has not explored to what extent the young generation<sup>(1)</sup> of Kroumen confront the most sacred ritual of conflict resolution of this group. Youth ability to challenge the *Bodior* ritual has to be explored because of the increasingly role played at the familial and community level in

the Kroumen society. Rural youth shaped by both traditional and modern rules must be incorporated into contemporary scholarship on peacemaking. By analyzing the actions of this important portion of the population, this article examines the factors that may hinder or consolidate traditional approaches of conflict resolution in Africa.

The research relies upon qualitative data. I first conducted fieldwork in 2005, and later in 2010, carrying out an observation study and interviews in the two Kroumen epicenter villages of Bésséréké and Ouéguiré. After establishing informal relationships with respondents, and in accordance with the ever volatile environment, I interviewed individuals as well as groups of elders and young people in both communities. In each village, I led focus groups with young men while I carried out one-on-one interviews with the chief of the village, the customary landholder, and the other elders. Travelling back and forth from one village to another offered opportunities to chat with people. I organized a community meeting that gathered the village. I was then able to observe the conflictual interactions between young men and elders. With villagers, I also visited immigrants abandoned farms. At that time, I only met the displaced Dagara and Lobi in the town of Tabou because they were not allowed to go back to villages and settlements.

Very recently, in fall 2016, due to an alleged shift in the relationship between immigrants and autochthons, I sent a team of assistant researchers to the same villages and to Tabou to gather updated data. Interviews conducted by the team were with local authorities, young men of Kroumen community, and non-native Burkinabè community leaders. The team met first the local authorities in Tabou to get the general picture of the situation. Then, they headed the villages where they met individually young people and members of the chiefdom.

## BACKGROUND AND RECALL OF THE TABOU INTERCOMMUNITY CONFLICT

Agriculture is by far the dominant economic activity in the Tabou region, accounting for almost 98 percent of its wealth. The perennial crops include, cocoa, coffee, rubber and palm. Cocoa is the mainstay of the Ivorian economy and provides more than half of its GDP. The contribution by the South-West zone in cocoa production is 34 percent of national output and 15 percent of world production (Tano, 2012). The dynamism of agriculture attracted populations from other regions of Côte d'Ivoire and nationals of West African countries. Apart from autochthons, the arrival of migrants occurred in waves since 1970, primarily because of the availability of wild forest favorable to flourishing cocoa farming. The inhabitants of Tabou areas consist of autochthones groups namely Kroumen who were mostly committed to activities on sea during the colonial period (Schwartz, 1980). As a result, they were engaged in only small-scale subsistence agriculture. After the independence of the country in 1960, the first president Houphouët-Boigny encouraged the exploitation of a huge reservoir of Tabou forest for cocoa production. Numerous allochthones, non-native peoples from other parts of Côte d'Ivoire, including Central (Baoulé), Eastern (Agni) and Northern

(Sénoufo, Tagbana, etc.) migrated to the Tabou region and the nearby towns of San-Pedro, Grabo, and Grand-Bereby. In the 1970s, migration intensified with immigrants from countries of the sub-region such as Burkina-Faso, Mali, Togo, Benin, etc.

Migrant populations settled in the region and built relationships with autochthones communities on the basis of the so-called '*tutorat*.'<sup>(2)</sup> *Tutorat* is a "land agreement" feature of the "moral economy" practiced within West African peasant societies (Chauveau, 2006). However in Tabou, like in all forest regions of western and south-western Côte d'Ivoire, this economic model entered into crisis in the early 1980s, which worsened in the early 1990s. Migrants tried to free themselves from the *tutorat* after they gained financial power through the cocoa economy. Over years, the distribution of assets (land, plantations, and money) was controlled by non-natives of the region. As the dependency relationships between migrants and their autochthon "guardians" reversed, intercommunity tensions arose (Babo & Droz, 2008; Babo, 2012). Later in the mid-1990s, the narrow nationalism promoted by the government to rule access to land, power and other social and political rights through the concept of *ivoirité* exacerbated the existing strains. *Ivoirité*, an ethnic-based and xenophobic ideology inspired state authorities when crafting the 1998 Land Act that excluded property rights for immigrants. The Act prompted intercommunity conflicts in the West of the country. It is against this backdrop that the deadly conflict between Kroumen and Lobi-Dagara occurred in late 1999.

According to elder M. Sawadogo of the Burkinabè community, on November 13, 1999 a clash occurred between an immigrant Lobi and one young autochthone Kroumen in the village of Bèsséréké over a piece of land.<sup>(3)</sup> The fight resulted in the death of the autochthone. In the all villages in the large Hompo tribe, the Kroumen called for retaliation. They attacked the settlements colloquially called "campements" of two Burkinabè Lobi and Dagara communities. The events shook the region, and villages in the other regional tribes followed what had quickly become the rule: chasing and ousting the Burkinabè farmers from the region. The clashes caused dozens of deaths as local security forces were overwhelmed by the uprisings. More than 20,000 Burkinabè farmers were forced to leave their plantations. Some of these displaced people initially headed to surrounding villages in the towns of Tabou, Grand-Béréby and San-Pedro while about 15,000, especially women and children, went back home in Burkina-Faso.<sup>(4)</sup>

## CUSTOMARY MANAGEMENT OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LOBI-DAGARA AND KROUMEN

In Ivorian rural areas, the modern judiciary system and customary rules have long overlapped but with a predominance of the latter in daily social relations. The management of land conflict falls primarily under traditional regulations of village affairs. Only when traditional arbitration fails, do people go to law enforcement (gendarmerie) and state officials (sous-prefect and prefect). In the traditional Kroumen process, like in the Hompo tribe where the conflict started, it is the

chief of village and members of the chiefdom who rule first the resolution of any conflicts (Schwartz, 1999). The matter is submitted to the arbitration of the tribal authority if one of the parties is not satisfied with the judgment at the village level. According to traditional rules, a murderer is banished from the village for a period of seven years, and his or her possessions are destroyed and/or burned down. As the elders we interviewed affirmed, expulsion in the Kroumen custom offers moral satisfaction, which strives to soothe the resentment of the victim's family. In addition, the rule aims to calm the anger of the autochthon's ancestors whose universe is stained by the blood of one of their descendants, and thus avoiding collective punishment. In the Kroumen tribes, traditional peacemaking encompasses violence, sacrifices, and negotiations with the family of the deceased at the end of the period of banishment for the eventual return of the perpetrator. At that moment, the perpetrator's family offers animals for immolation during the *Bodior* ritual to seal peace.

### I. Predominance of Traditional Kroumen Rules

Relations between national and local authorities have always been determinant in the management of land tenure (Sara, 2017). After the clashes broke out between Burkinabè planters and the Kroumen in the village of Bèsséréké, violence quickly spread across the region. In response, the government of President Konan Bédié engaged in negotiations with the two communities to bring back peace. The autochthones claimed their traditions to resolve the conflict. At that time, the narrow nationalism was also a xenophobic propaganda that as of 1994 mainly targeted Burkinabè living in Côte d'Ivoire (Babo, 2017). In addition, in 1999 the state was weakened by the country's first coup d'état. As the government's authority was hindered by instability the management of the land conflict in Tabou fell under the traditional regulations of village and tribe affairs.

Following the Hompô tribe traditions, the parents of the Kroumen victim sought arbitration before the chief of Bèsséréké village and members of his committee who constitute the first institution to engage in the resolution of such conflicts. Later, the whole village sent the case before the chief of the Hompô tribe. It reached this tribal level because even though the Lobi-Dagara argued that the perpetrator acted in self-defense, according to the autochthons they were protecting the murderer. The issue, then, reached all Hompô villages. Moreover, claiming the occupation of their lands by foreigners, traditional authorities of the Hompô extended the conflict to the entire Kroumen tribes in the Tabou region. Accordingly, the heads of all villages and tribes<sup>(5)</sup> met in late 1999 in the village Djamatéké within a "high customary court" set up especially for the occasion. The trial took place in the absence of the Burkinabè who had fled, but instead with the presence of the local leaders of the main political parties, and especially the youth who endorsed and supported the court. As they upheld their sacred custom that prohibits any drop of blood to be spilled on the soil of their ancestors, the traditional authorities ultimately concluded that Lobi-Dagara were to be expelled from all Kroumen villages for seven years.

This banishment revealed the ethnonationalistic dimension of the conflict to

control land. In the aftermath of their decision, Kroumen local leaders told the representative of the government, “They [the Lobi and Dagara] are foreigners, they should go. They should leave the lands of our ancestors”.<sup>(6)</sup> However, the solution to punish a whole community, instead of the only perpetrator did not resolve the conflict, because the banned Burkinabè were asking to get access to their farms and pleading to return back in their settlements.

## II. Extension of the conflict and *Bodior* ritual for reconciliation

After their expulsion from the Kroumen tribes of Tabou in December 1999, while thousands Burkinabè returned home, others scattered in the nearby areas of Grabo, Grand-Bereby and San Pedro. From these places, expelled farmers were expecting a rapid peaceful resolution to return to their “campements”. Others, frustrated by the decision, pushed by sidestepping the ban and attempting to access their farms. This resistance created more clashes as Kroumen argued that Burkinabè did not comply with their customs. In September 2000, another land dispute opposed Burkinabè to their Kroumen hosts in San-Pedro resulting in the evacuation of a thousand Burkinabè (Bredeloup, 2006; Schwartz, 1999). As of 2000, regarding the ongoing intercommunity tensions in the South-West region, the government of President Laurent Gbagbo tried to find a durable solution. Using the “national peace day” of November 15, 2001, the minister Emile Boga Doudou offered his mediation and tried another round of negotiations to conciliate the Kroumen and Lobi-Dagara communities by visiting traditional authorities of San Pedro et Tabou regions.

However, the evolution of the national political crisis worsened local tensions. The rebellion that broke out in Côte d’Ivoire in September 2002 was prepared and launched from Burkina-Faso (Banegas & Otayek, 2003). Against this backdrop, the young Kroumen radicalized their positions about the ban and started to suggest the idea of a “definitive ban” of the Lobi-Dagara. In 2005, six years after the expulsion, the Inter-ministerial Crisis Committee, which was created by both the Ivorian and Burkinabè governments after the events of Tabou in 1999 was reactivated (Bredeloup, 2006). As the ban was reaching its end, officials of the two countries undertook mediation missions towards the two communities in conflict. In the course of the discussions, the Ivorian authorities appealed to Kroumen’s forgiveness and acceptance of the return of the Burkinabè farmers in the region. After tough negotiations, an agreement in principle was reached. The following year, in 2006, which was the seventh year of ban, a solemn ceremony to seal the reconciliation held in Tabou gathered Kroumen and Burkinabè. At this occasion, in presence of both the Ivorian Minister Danon Djédjé and the Ambassador of Burkina-Faso in Côte d’Ivoire, Emile Ilboudo, the Kroumen customary authorities officially lifted the ban against the Burkinabè farmers.

This ceremony, in spite of the presence of state authorities, was carried out within the true Kroumen tradition. In fact, “Our ambassador has even offered four beef for reconciliation feast” as part of the Kroumen *Bodior cayou* rites recalls Bangré Lamoussa,<sup>(7)</sup> a Burkinabè representative. According to M. Ouellé, the chief of Bèsséréké village, the *Bodior cayou* incarnates both the mystic guide



and the institution that manage the resolution of the conflict in the Kroumen tribe.<sup>(8)</sup> The *Bodior* as an individual is the only one who convenes people for the arbitration trial or reconciliation rites. He is the most powerful and customary authority whose decision cannot be disputed or denied by any party in conflict. Thus, when hosting the ceremony in December 2006, he required from the Burkinabè community the four animals for immolation and two bottles of liquor that he used for libations and other incantations to plead with the ancestors for forgiveness. The *Bodior* as an institution is a ritual that encompassed two sides, one secret and the other public. In the secrecy, the *Bodior* and his assistants slaughtered the animals. The blood was poured on the soil along with incantations as a symbol of the guilty Burkinabè perpetrator of murder, along with his community, and his request for mercy from the parents of the autochthon victim. Parts of the meat of the animals were then cooked very quickly in a light sauce and shared only by the *Bodior* and his companions.<sup>(9)</sup> Another part of the meat was then cooked with red palm oil and dedicated to the ancestors. At this stage of the ritual, according to the elders, women were allowed neither to attend nor to eat this first meal. As for the public facet of the ritual, the meat was distributed to all families to cook and share with all village members. At this point, both the victim and perpetrators' families shared and ate the meal to cement reconciliation. Through this ritual, members of the two communities agreed to put an end to the desire for revenge and to grant each other forgiveness to foster a sustainable return to social cohesion.

Adler (1982: 153) presents revenge as the obligation of a particular group—family, lineage, and clan—to get compensation for the blood shed by one of its members. Thus, the symbolic characteristic of blood for blood through animal immolation within the *Bodior* aimed to definitely prevent any acts of revenge. In the aftermath of the ritual, Dagara and Lobi farms were restored in most villages, and life somehow returned to normal. Even in several settlements around the village of Bèsséréké, where the crisis started in 1999, some Burkinabè farmers were allowed to return to their farms. Nevertheless, the peace did not wipe out resentment that was ingrained in the villages of the Hompo tribe where Burkinabè planters were still strongly rejected, especially by the young people.

## YOUTH AND THE CHALLENGE OF TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS

Since 2006, several Burkinabè once pariahs, were able to return to their farms where they had been hunted. According to Mr. Nemlin Hiné, Permanent Secretary General of the Peace Committee,<sup>(10)</sup> "Peace returns everywhere in the other tribes except, unfortunately, in villages of the Hompo tribe, where we face obstacles which are intimately linked to the absence of junction" (Traoré, 2010: 1). Despite the sacred essence of the ritual, young people of Hompo tribe dared to defy it. The youth not only expressed negative opinion about their elders' action, but they also rationally criticized the *Bodior* ritual itself. The young men acknowledged that by contesting the ritual they do not comply with the traditions, which state that the expelled can return after the time of banishment through sacrifices.



In the area of the conflict, relations among the uneducated elders and literate youth has shifted based on youth critics in regard to their open grievances and critiques. On the one hand, parents and older generations lost their authority over their children and the youth in the wake of the long and complex economic, social and political crisis in the country (Buono & Babo, 2013). Most of these young men are educated and have been urban migrants for years before returning to their villages. In their families, young men expressed discontent towards the elders, who they accused of sorcery, blaming them for misfortune during their migration in cities. Moreover, young people criticized traditional chiefs and heads of lineage for their selfishness and charged them with corruption for selling off or gifting away the land without familial agreement. One young man from Bés-séréké said, “We are in this village, but we don’t have any plot for farming because our parents have handed over the family land for free to outsiders”.<sup>(11)</sup>

On the other hand, young Kroumen settled in villages relied on their acknowledgement of both customary rules and the 1998 Land Act to strongly claim the control of the land tenure. The younger generation referred to their knowledge of the traditions in their firm stance against the ritual. In 2008, two years after the rites of *Bodior* were performed, young people’s position radicalized in Bés-séréké, Klatoué, Déhié and Djourou, and they refused to accept the return of the Lobi-Dagara in the Hompo tribe. A returnee, Sidiki Sawadogo, who tried to access his plantation in the village of Djourou explains: “Young Kroumen attacked me on my plantation and beat me bloody.”<sup>(12)</sup> The autochthons explained this extreme reaction by arguing that during the time of the ban, some Lobi-Dagara hid in the forest of Grand-Bereby (North of Tabou) and launched raids to Hompo villages. These expelled Lobi-Dagara committed violence against the Kroumen in retaliation of what they considered an unjust expulsion. The immigrants we interviewed acknowledged that some among them who might have carried out the attacks had difficulty to comply with the Kroumen’s ban custom to resolve a conflict. For many young Kroumen the immigrants’ attitude challenged and undermined autochthon’s traditions. Undermining their traditions represents the greatest danger to the existence of their tribe as a social group. The attitude of defiance by Lobi-Dagara had therefore fueled the intransigence of the Kroumen youth who called for a definitive ban of Burkinabè from their villages.

At the heart of their traditional rite, the Kroumen elderly incorporate the risk of death for those who do not respect the pact of the conciliation. In spite of this, the negotiations and appeals to respect the word, the institution and the appeasement action of traditional authorities have been exhausted since the youth in the Hompo tribe refused to seal peace with the Burkinabè. Young Kroumen people fulfilled of resentment requested that Burkinabè stay away from their villages to avoid bloody clashes. According to the young men we interviewed, it is clear that new deadly fights would end up into a new expulsion still based on the Kroumen tradition. For the youth, the *Bodior* does not consider their voice or concerns about land access. The ritual allowed the return of the Lobi-Dagara to their lands, which were occupied and exploited by these youth for seven years. The defiant attitude of young Kroumen is based on their belief that the banned Burkinabè would never come back from the exile in their homeland Burkina-

Faso. The youth's position of contention can thus be analyzed in the perspective of their desire to reconquer the land that their parents ceded decades ago to Lobi-Dagara farmers within the ambiguous *tutorat*. They still refuse to let the Lobi-Dagara go back to their farms. Therefore, for the youth the *Bodior* ritual that happened in 2006 did not solve the original cause of the conflict: the difficult access to land for the young Kroumen. The ritual represents a symbol of subjugation to outsiders that they do not agree with. In their sights, complying with the rite is a way to lose the opportunity to renegotiate property rights of their familial lands.

Besides traditions, young people in the Hompo villages also relied on their knowledge of the modern land rules to contest the power and symbolism of the *Bodior* ritual and the subsequent return of the immigrants to their farms. During our focus groups, many educated young men have repeatedly referred to the 1998 Land Act that affirms "Only Ivorian nationals can claim land property"<sup>(13)</sup> to hold their position against the *Bodior* ritual. Strategies against the ritual included continuous occupation of immigrant's lands. Young Kroumen know that by creating conditions for litigation over a parcel of land, they can stop its exploitation by the administrative authority until a solution is found. As long as the case is pending before the modern local administration, the Burkinabè farmers could not access and exploit the land. In 2016, ten years after the *Bodior* ritual was performed, the strategy has prevented many Lobi-Dagara farmers from taking back lands in the Hompo tribe. Approximately 2,000 hectares of plantations belonging to over 200 Burkinabè farmers are still held (sold or exploited) by Kroumen in the villages of Djourou and Dehi in the Hompo tribe.<sup>(14)</sup>

Youth have also politically engaged in the national crisis, which empowered their position and served to challenge the ritual. During the military rebellion that broke out in 2002 with the support of Burkina-Faso authorities, Kroumen youth built up their legitimacy in the community arena by setting up self-defense committees and organized pro-government militia called "Jeunes patriotes" ('young patriots'). The activism of young men of Bèsséréké and Ouéguiré in this political movement as of 2002 resulted in hatred discourses and attitudes towards the Burkinabè immigrants. Through their commitment to the national cause, youth gained leadership positions in the management of the public and village affairs. The young patriots became powerful leaders without whom nothing would be possible. For any community actions, local authorities, political leaders, and external interveners would more and more consider to interact with the group of young people, including the young patriots. In some villages like in Bèsséréké, Ouéguiré and Klatoué, they even reached prominent roles as chief or members of the chiefdom. Henceforth, young people found themselves in a position to challenge the authority of traditional institution, the *Bodior* ritual that sealed the reintegration of the Burkinabè.

## CONCLUSION

Traditionalists like Wiredu (2010) provides a defense of African tradition by pointing out the efficacy of the traditional mechanisms of governance including resolution of conflicts. In the 1999 Tabou conflict, the *Bodior* traditional ritual acknowledged by the state authorities brought back peace between Kroumen and Burkinabè Lobi-Dagara. In the aftermath, most immigrant farmers retrieved their farms and their settlements.

However, despite the enforcement of this traditional mechanism to solve an old conflict, tensions are still alive and latent. The *Bodior* ritual and its deep-rooted strength as a symbol to seal peace did not prevent young Kroumen of the Hompo tribe from rejecting the return of the Burkinabè to their farms. In villages, the feeling of rejection is evident through the grievance, critics, and frustrations of youth that served to defy elders and their ritual. The suspicion among the two communities is prevalent. The disagreement between young people and Kroumen elders focuses on the fact that the ritual did not contribute to resolving their difficulties concerning land access. For the youth, the *Bodior* built peace by enforcing the return of the expelled Lobi-Dagara farmers, while it did not address how young men would access to land, how they should think as a community to share peacefully the increasingly scarce land.

In regards to the Ivorian conflict resolution, the legitimacy of traditional authorities and the power of customary mechanisms are challenged by youth who no longer trust their traditional leaders. It appeared that in the resolution process the traditional mechanisms must treat not only the effects but also the causes of conflict. In the contemporary society, customary peacemaking should also integrate the youth who have gained social and political positions in village leadership as well as their perspectives that have been shaped by a combination of knowledge of traditions and laws for resolving conflicts over land access.

## NOTES

- (1) In this paper by “youth” I refer to young males as villagers themselves presented this group during the fieldwork in the region. The term “youth” in the Kroumen social categorization doesn’t include females. Young females are incorporated into either the category “children” or “women”.
- (2) Its principle is that any beneficiary of a delegation of land rights contracts a permanent duty vis-à-vis recognition of her/his “guardian.” In return, the land assignment requires the beneficiary to show some gratitude, “gift-cons” that embody the moral duty that sealed the alliance between the autochthones and the migrants.
- (3) Interviews with chief of Ouéguiré village and see also <http://lebel.centerblog.net/6459415-Conflit-foncier-de-Tabou> (Accepted on November 15, 2017)
- (4) 75 to 80% of women and children, according to the CONASUR (National Committee of Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation).
- (5) Bloga, Bapo, Plapo, Tépo Sud, Tépo-Nord, Trépo, Touo, Ourouboué, and Tahoux.
- (6) Fieldwork, 2005.
- (7) <http://lebel.centerblog.net/6459415-Conflit-foncier-de-Tabou> (Accepted on November

- 15, 2017).
- (8) Fieldwork, Bèsséréké, 2016.
- (9) Idem.
- (10) A structure under the direct authority of the Prefect of Tabou region.
- (11) Fieldwork, Bèsséréké, 2016.
- (12) <http://lebel.centerblog.net/6459415-Conflit-foncier-de-Tabou> (Accepted on November 15, 2017).
- (13) Article 1 of the law 98-750 of December 23, 1998 states that only Ivorian nationals can claim land property rights.
- (14) <http://lebel.centerblog.net/6459415-Conflit-foncier-de-Tabou> (Accepted on November 15, 2017).

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